



[REDACTED]

Colin Morrison
North West Mull Community Woodland
Company Ltd
Penmore
Tobermory
Isle of Mull
PA75 6QS

Your ref:
Our ref: CB00221

16 January 2018

Dear Colin

**COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUY: PART 2 OF THE LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003
“the Act”
NORTH WEST MULL COMMUNITY WOODLAND COMPANY LTD – ISLAND OF ULVA
AND ASSOCIATED ISLANDS AND LAND AT ULVA FERRY, ISLE OF MULL**

Thank you for submitting North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd’s (NWMCWC) Section 51(3)B Information Form (which included a draft business plan, feasibility study, Membership details and current Governing Document) to Scottish Ministers.

In order to fully consider the Community Right to Buy, Scottish Ministers are now requesting further information under section 51B(5) and section 52(5)(b) of the Act. NWMCWC has until 23:59pm on the **22 January 2018** to provide this information to Scottish Ministers.

BALLOT

Scottish Ministers are aware of the material that was issued by the ERS. Can NWMCWC confirm:

- **That if NWMCWC issued additional ballot promotion material, could they please arrange to forward copies of it?**
- **Please advise what other sources NWMCWC used to promote the ballot?**

BUSINESS PLAN

Scottish Ministers would, at this stage of the process expect for communities to have a reasonable worked business plan (BP) on their proposals. Although, Scottish Ministers do accept these are living documents. Scottish Ministers also acknowledge that communities

who submit a timeous application may not have proposals more defined than those who submit a late application who should have clearer idea of how the proposals will work.

Scottish Ministers have reviewed the information supplied under Section 51(B) and attachments and are seeking clarification on a number of points. This will help Scottish Ministers fully consider the application for consent to proceed under the Right to Buy.

Scottish Ministers are aware that a survey was issued asking if people would like to live on Ulva. Could NWMCWC please:

- **Provide Scottish Ministers with the current statistical breakdown of the responses received to this survey?**

Scottish Ministers are aware that moveable property and livestock didn't form part of the valuation. Can NWMCWC confirm:

- **Whether they plan to negotiate the inclusion of the existing moveable property in the sale and what such moveable property it is?**

NWMCWC have indicated that properties will require some upgrading and timescales for this have been provided at table 4 of the BP. The BP also seems to indicate that the bulk of the proposals using properties will operate during the "summer season". Scottish Ministers do expect that land to be used and sustainable all year. As owning assets will always occur costs throughout the year. Can NWMCWC please advise:

- **How the land and assets will be used out with this "summer season"? (i.e. what will the land and assets be used for during the "winter season")?**

Within the finance tables (appendix 1 to 9 of the BP) you have it marked in years. Can NWMCWC please advise how these years periods are calculated to run form.

- **Are the year projections starting from purchase (i.e. August to July) or each financial year (April to March) or each calendar year (January to December)?**

At this point in the process Scottish Ministers would expect a community to know whether (A) the community will run all or most of the assets or (B) whether most of the assets will be rented out. Scottish Ministers are unclear which option is NWMCWC preferred route for some of the proposals. Can NWMCWC confirm:

- **Which option either (A) or (B) for each of their proposals they are going to pursue? And whether (B) for some will be considered as a back-up plan should (A) not become viable?**

In table 5 of the BP mention is made about 4 craft studios. Can NWMCWC please advise:

- **Where they foresee these going?**

Upon reviewing the BP, Scottish Ministers don't see the church or the land at Ulva Ferry on mainland Mull. Please can NWMCWC advise:

- **What they foresee using the church for?**
- **What are their plans for the land at Ulva Ferry (and the slipways)?**

Scottish Ministers note a proposal for the possible creation of small crofts. Can MWMCWC please confirm if:

- **Any discussions with the Crofting Commission have taken place in regards to this and if so, what has been the Commission reaction to creating new crofts?**

Scottish Ministers note the proposals for the woodland and the agricultural land, and that further consideration on how to best to utilise this land will take place, and that Brexit may have an impact on the agricultural side. Given Brexit will occur in 2019 can MWMCWC please advise:

- **What contingency planning is being considering for the agricultural land should Brexit not make the agricultural land viable?**
- **What are NWMCWC plans for the land that isn't covered by the woodland or the agricultural land? (I.e. is there any bio-diversity (given rare wildlife) or general land management plan being planned, and if so, what is it?)**
- **When will NWMCWC know how their plans for the forestry and agricultural land?**

Scottish Ministers note NWMCWC plans for re-developing the current building assets with the creation of camping sites, tourist facilities, area for new business, and housing improvements. Can NWMCWC please advise:

- **Would any development require planning consents?**
- **Whether any contact has been with the relevant planning authorities?**
- **Could planning effect the proposed development timescales?**

Scottish Ministers are aware of a track running from Gometra to the boat house for use by the residents of Gometra and clearly any new residents living on Ulva. Can NWMCWC please advise:

- **That upgrading the path network on Ulva will take place and when it's expected to start?**

Mention is made of selling land (excluding selling land for housing plots). Scottish Ministers consider that allowing a community to buy land and then to sell parts of it may not be in the spirit of the Act. Should NWMCWC be considering selling any land after purchase, then please advise:

- **Under what reason would it occur?**

NWMCWC have indicated that a development manager will manage the assets with some of the sites and other buildings appearing to include more than just the development officer (i.e. cleaning/admin staff), and mention is made about volunteers (table 6 in the BP for example). Can NWMCWC please advise:

- **How they intend to fund such a posts after the initial 18 months, if external funding is not secured?**
- **Who would carry out the work improvements or future maintenance on Ulva (i.e. local or national trades people)?**

- **Give an indication of how many possible jobs (direct or indirect) could be created and whether they would likely be full/part time or seasonal?**
- **Would there be opportunities for other local volunteering or education opportunities?**

Scottish Ministers expect that any purchase of assets by a community will bring benefits to the whole community (through either the use of the asset, employment, benefiting from visitors using the asset etc). Upon reviewing the BP, Scottish Ministers (other than Ulva Ferry School class role potentially increasing if more people stay on Ulva) can't seem to see how the wider North West Mull community and indeed Mull as whole would benefit from owning the land in question. Please can NWMCWC:

- **Give an expanded indication to Scottish Ministers of what benefits the wider community will gain by owning Ulva? (this could be the Economic, Environmental and Social benefits – as like answered in the application form).**

The income on rental appears to be based on “full occupancy levels” right from the start. Can NWMCWC confirm:

- **Whether the calculations are based on full occupancy levels?**

Scottish Ministers note community shares may be an option to help fund purchase. However an NWMCWC current legal structure appears not to allow this. Also NWMCWC state selling off surplus assets could also help to raise purchase costs.

- **Can NWMCWC please advise how would they achieve raising community shares and what surplus assets NWMCWC are thinking could be sold?**

Scottish Ministers note the list of potential funding sources (including loans). Can NWMCWC please confirm (could take the form of a table to reply and also covers purchase and development):

- **How much money you are planning to ask the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) for?**
- **What are the back-up funders is the SLF do not award full grant requested?**
- **Has contact been made with the funders as noted in the BP?**
- **How much are NWMCWC planning to seek in funding from these funders? and for what?**

Scottish Ministers acknowledge this is a long term project, and it will take more than 5 years to implement and that long term forecasts may not be ready, however can NWMCWC provide:

- **An expected 10 and 15 year projections of where they'd like to be by then?**

Scottish Ministers also have a couple of other enquiries about costs

- **Please advise what other sources (other than crowd funding) they are planning to use/apply to, to make up the missing 5% on purchase costs?**
- **Do NWMCWC propose to use any of their surplus capital to invest in buying or developing the land?**
- **If not, please can you explain why the company buying the land is unprepared to use their own money to help with purchase or development?**

Scottish Ministers aren't sure if all projected income and outcome streams (in appendix 9 of the BP) have been captured (for example, have business rates been taken into account, has any legal costs been taken into account in relation to potential planning costs or asset development costs (like Health & Safety), staffing costs, costs for the church and Ulva Ferry land or costs associated with croft creation, acquiring machinery, and for income whether rental incomes from craft sites, or Ulva Church, or land at Ulva ferry, the woodland, farming etc) have been captured.

Scottish Ministers can see how NWMCWC will be able to monitor the success of the repopulation of Ulva, but can NWMCWC please advise:

- **How you plan to monitor the long term success of the other proposals?**

Feasibility Study

Scottish Ministers note differences between proposals in the feasibility study to the BP. In that a number of proposals in the feasibility study don't appear in the business plan (for example – tourist boards, renewables, affordable new build homes, conservation, some tourist idea's, transport infrastructure etc. Or in the BP last page that a number of proposals may be investigated further. Can NWMCWC please advise:

- **Why some of the proposals in the feasibility study (which also formed part of the CRtB application) haven't appeared in the BP?**
- **And give an indication of when the proposals as noted in the last page of the BP will be investigated?**

Scottish Ministers acknowledge that a BP is a living document, and that maybe not everything has been captured in the version supplied, but could appear in future BP as plans are more firmed up. Scottish Ministers would be grateful for a response to our request for additional by 23:59pm on the **22 January 2018**. If no response is received, then Scottish Ministers will make a decision on the evidence submitted by NWMCWC on the 9 January 2018.

Yours sincerely


On behalf of Scottish Ministers

[REDACTED]

From: John Addy [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 January 2018 18:36
To: [REDACTED] crtbt mailbox
Subject: Ulva for sale to the highest bidder
Attachments: FOI-17-0257 - Ulva Meeting with Bell Ingram.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hello [REDACTED],

We are aware that the owners of Ulva have been saying that they would not necessarily be selling to the highest bidder and that our statements to that effect were misleading or inaccurate.

The attached note of a meeting which is now apparently in the public domain under FOI is of interest in its confirmation that sale to the highest bidder is exactly what the owner was trying to achieve. (last paragraph on first page).

I expect you are well aware of the document but as quite a bit of water has flowed under the bridge since June, I thought it might be useful to forward it now just in case.

regards

John Addy

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

Ulva Meeting with Bell Ingram

	Moray Finch - General Manager of the Mull and Iona Community Trust
	Sandy Brunton – Director of the Mull and Iona Community Trust
Attendees	Colin Morrison - North West Mull Community Woodland Company Chairman
	John Addy - North West Mull Community Woodland Company Director
	Ran Morgan – Knight Frank
	Paul Nicholl – Bell Ingram
Date	05 June 2017, 4.30pm
Location	Bell Ingram, Oban

The conversation between all parties was open and convivial, if not that enlightening.

It was understood that the constituted community body would be either MICT or NWMCWC or a combination of both. They confirmed that there was strong intention within the community bodies to purchase Ulva, although this hadn't been discussed out with the immediate directors of the community bodies themselves. Both community bodies admitted that at this stage this was an emotional desire to purchase, rather than a decision based on any sound financial credentials.

RM asked what the desire to purchase Ulva was based on and the response from Sandy Brunton was that North West Mull is a particularly fragile area in terms of depopulation and they were keen to encourage repopulation. A community purchase of the Island of Ulva may help this. RM then asked what their business case was based on and how they foresaw sustainable development. Again, none of them had appeared to have thought this through and the idea of resurrecting the oyster farm was muted.

Colin Morrison asked how far the intended sale had progressed. RM said that all the marketing was prepared and that the sale was already in the private market and it was anticipated that an open market launch would occur within the next month. The community bodies would far prefer a private negotiated purchase rather than going through the formal registering process.

PN and RM were then pressed to give a price which we declined but intimated that this might be available in the coming fortnight.

Colin Morrison asked to see the estate accounts. RM explained that this really wasn't appropriate because their budget should be based on what they plan to do with the island in the future not looking in the rear view mirror so to speak. They clearly have no grasp at all as to what it would cost to run the island and PN volunteered that there is current shortfall of about £100,000 which surprised them.

PN and RM stressed that JH wished to sell the island for the highest possible price and did not wish to exclude anyone from the sale. We stressed that JH was happy to continue a dialogue with the community but that the dialogue would be running alongside a dialogue with other private individuals. Again, PN and RM were pressed for the accounts and whilst we promised nothing, we did offer to assist to an extent with basic costs and current income.

The community bodies were grateful to have been given a month's notice before open marketing and to be able to report back to their governing bodies to discuss what to do next: how to prepare for a purchase, prepare a business case and think about funding. It was clear to PN and RM that none of this thus far had taken place. RM and PM said that they were happy to keep an open dialogue with them and encourage them to do the same.

The meeting finished at 5.30pm.

[REDACTED]

From: John Addy [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 January 2018 17:43
To: [REDACTED] crtbt mailbox
Subject: CTRB Ref CB00221 Ulva and Associated Islands and land at Ulva Ferry
Attachments: Cover letter.pdf; Further info for CRTB 21 1 18.pdf; App 1 R and A scans.pdf; App 2 social media screenshots.pdf; App 3 mailshot.pdf; App 4 Would you like to live on Ulva.pdf; App 5 Expressions of interest.pdf

Hello [REDACTED]

Please find attached our response to your letter of 16th January requesting further information in relation to the ballot and our business plan.

Grateful if you could confirm receipt in good time tomorrow. If we haven't heard by lunchtime I'll phone and/or send again.

As we discussed on the phone the other day, given the short timescale for getting the info to you and also the fact that to arrive in Edinburgh on a Monday mail needs to be in the post box on Mull by 8:00am on the Saturday, we can only meet your deadline by sending the material by this email.

However, I will also put a hard copy in the post tomorrow morning.

regards

John Addy

Director
North West Mull Community Woodland Company

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>



North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd
Company No 287343 Charity No. SCO37336
Vat Registration Number 976 552671

21st January 2018

Stuart Hartil
Community Land Team
D Spur
Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

Your Reference: CB00221

Dear Stuart

**COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUY: PART 2 OF THE LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT
2003 "the Act"
NORTH WEST MULL COMMUNITY WOODLAND COMPANY LTD – ISLAND OF
ULVA AND ASSOCIATED ISLANDS AND LAND AT ULVA FERRY, ISLE OF MULL**

Please find attached our response to your letter of 16th January 2018 requesting further information for Scottish Ministers under section 51B(5) and section 52(5)(b) of the Act.

I hope this provides you with the information you require. We would of course be pleased to answer any other queries Ministers may have.

Yours sincerely,


John Addy

Director
North West Mull Community Woodland Company

CB00221

COMMUNITY EIGHT TO BUY: PART 2 OF THE LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003 “the Act”

NORTH WEST MULL COMMUNITY WOODLAND COMPANY LTD – ISLE OF ULVA AND ASSOCIATED ISLANDS AND LAND AT ULVA FERRY, ISLE OF MULL

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUESTED BY SCOTTISH MINISTERS

BALLOT

Scottish Ministers are aware of the material that was issued by the ERS. Can NWMCWC confirm:

That if NWMCWC issued additional ballot promotion material, could they please arrange to forward copies of it?

Please advise what other sources NWMCWC used to promote the ballot?

The material that was issued by Electoral Reform Services (ERS) accompanying the ballot paper comprised the Schedule 10 form and a cover note, approved by ERS, based on the one used a while ago in the Portobello RTB ballot.

This request from Scottish Ministers for further information relating to the ballot is made under Section 52(5)(b) of the Act which requires NWMCWC to “...provide such information relating to any consultation with those eligible to vote in the ballot undertaken during the period in which the ballot was carried out...”

The ballot papers were posted out from London by ERS on 19th December and they began arriving in the post on Mull from 20th December onwards. The closing date for ballots to be received by ERS was 8th January. NWMCWC therefore takes the “ballot period” to mean from 19th December 2017 to 8th January 2018.

NWMCWC wish to advise Ministers that no “consultation” with eligible voters took place during the ballot period.

As to “promotion material” during the ballot period, at the end of December the local monthly newspaper, “Round and About Mull & Iona” published a letter by Colin Morrison, Chair of NWMCWC and also carried a promotional notice placed by NWMCWC. (Please see Appendix 1 for material published in Round and About)

On 4th January an email reminder to vote was sent to all NWMCWC members. During the ballot period, the only other dissemination of information by or on behalf of NWMCWC was via social media. (Please see Appendix 2 for 4th January email and screenshots of Facebook and Twitter postings by or on behalf of NWMCWC)

Prior to the ballot period, a mailshot was mostly hand delivered (just a few were posted) by NWMCWC to every Household with eligible voters and this document was also posted on the NWMCWC website. Although this promotional material falls outside the ballot period we include it in this response so that Ministers have the full picture regarding the material which was circulating at the time. (Please see Appendix 3 for the pre-ballot mailshot)

BUSINESS PLAN

Scottish Ministers are aware that a survey was issued asking if people would like to live on Ulva. Could NWMCWC please:

Provide Scottish Ministers with the current statistical breakdown of the responses received to this survey?

NWMCWC did not carry out a “survey” in any formal sense, though on November 26th a notice was posted on social media inviting people to express an interest in living on Ulva. This was done both to provide an initial idea of the possible demand and also as general publicity for the objective of increasing the island’s population. The notice also helped as part of NWMCWC’s effort to engage with as many members of the existing and potential community as possible. (Please see Appendix 4 for the notice which was put out on social media)

NWMCWC is pleased to provide Ministers with information on the expressions of interest regarding living on Ulva, and also from people with suggestions as to possible business ventures. However this cannot be described as a “statistical breakdown” because we have not (yet) embarked on a thorough survey. Also people made contact in response to diverse sources of information on the project, not just the notice the Company put out.

The informal marketing described above did demonstrate the potential for and interest in new people to come to Ulva – which will be strengthened by the detailed marketing campaign planned by NWMCWC, and which is included in its SLF application. (Please see Appendix 5 for a summary of the approaches received to date.)

NWMCWC would like to note that the Business Plan submitted on 9th January is the position as it was on that date. Already since then we have started to develop the project with plans for a more formal and detailed marketing exercise, and an approach to Rural Housing Scotland for support with a Rural Housing Fund application.

We appreciate that Ministers have acknowledged that the Business Plan is a living document. The point made above in reference to people moving to Ulva finds echoes as we consider a number of the requests for further information. In a nutshell, many of the things being asked for will be developed between now and the date of acquisition and in a number of cases it is simply not possible at this stage to provide as much detail as may be desired.

Scottish Ministers are aware that moveable property and livestock didn’t form part of the valuation. Can NWMCWC confirm:

Whether they plan to negotiate the inclusion of the existing moveable property in the sale and what such moveable property it is?

On several occasions, NWMCWC has tried to open a dialogue with the owners with a view to discussing many aspects of the proposed purchase including moveable property and livestock. To date these approaches have not been successful. The assets that NWMCWC wishes to buy will, of course, be dependent on which elements of the Business Plan are prioritised for action. It may be the case therefore that some of these assets are not required in the short term and it would be more appropriate for the owner to try and make arrangements to sell elsewhere. We would expect this level of detail to be contained in discussions that can only start once the Minister’s decision is given and all sides know whether a sale to the community is to proceed.

It should be noted that all cattle were removed from Ulva a couple of months ago, though around 30 Hebridean sheep remain on the island.

NWMCWC have indicated that properties will require some upgrading and timescales for this have been provided at table 4 of the BP. The BP also seems to indicate that the bulk of the proposals using properties will operate during the “summer season”. Scottish Ministers do expect that land to be used and sustainable all year. As owning assets will always occur costs throughout the year. Can NWMCWC please advise:

How the land and assets will be used out with this “summer season”? (i.e. what will the land and assets be used for during the “winter season”)?

It is absolutely the case that NWMCWC intend that the land and built assets are used throughout the year to the maximum possible extent. The present plan is to upgrade 6 houses as soon as possible and have most of them lived in year-round under secure tenancies.

Some of the properties will have a dual purpose of providing year-round housing in addition to commercial operation during the summer season (notably Ulva House and Ardalum House, but possibly others as well offering Bed and Breakfast accommodation), These properties will therefore not only provide business income during the summer months but will also add to the population growth targets by providing year round homes for families/individuals who may also have secondary employment/self-employment as well.

Whilst existing housing is being redeveloped on the island, there may be opportunities to time renovation work to coincide with the winter season so that Fisherman’s Cottage for example, can be used as temporary housing in the winter and continue to be furnished holiday letting in the summer. During the winter spare letting capacity in properties such as Ardalum House could be useful for accommodating contractors working on the island. It is possible that a Development Officer could be based at Ardalum House year-round to assist with the admin of running the hostel and campsite and an office in the premises can also be used for Estate management and development work on a year round basis. (These comments are made on the assumption that NWMCWC is able to purchase Ardalum, which as Ministers are aware, is not part of the present RTB registration.)

Other properties, such as the bothies at Cragaig and Bearnus may see more seasonal rather than year-round use and this may also be the case with potential holiday lets such as Fisherman’s Cottage (also see above). However, the potential for extending the visitor season generally and also bringing in visitors at Christmas and Hogmanay should not be underestimated. NWMCWC intends to very actively market Ulva as a visitor destination and we are confident that once visitor accommodation is available numbers will rise quickly throughout the year including, to an extent in winter as is now typical in many parts of the island.

To ensure that the financial projections are as realistic as possible, the ability to extend the use of properties beyond the traditional summer tourist season has not been factored into the Business Plan in the first 5 years and is not considered critical to the financial sustainability of the buyout.

Of course the land, in terms of agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and community facilities will be in use all year round.

NWMCWC will also be seeking to promote off-season activities and business opportunities such as “Dark Sky” tourism, University Field Courses, study groups and art or music courses and residencies.

Within the finance tables (appendix 1 to 9 of the BP) you have it marked in years. Can NWMCWC please advise how these years periods are calculated to run form.

Are the year projections starting from purchase (i.e. August to July) or each financial year (April to March) or each calendar year (January to December)?

The projections have been detailed in years rather than specific dates to ensure that in the event of any unforeseen delays in the sale/purchase transaction that the business plan does not require a

wholesale rewrite. At the moment, it is anticipated that the projections cover the period commencing Autumn 2018 to the end of summer 2019.

At this point in the process Scottish Ministers would expect a community to know whether (A) the community will run all or most of the assets or (B) whether most of the assets will be rented out. Scottish Ministers are unclear which option is NWMCWC preferred route for some of the proposals. Can NWMCWC confirm:

Which option either (A) or (B) for each of their proposals they are going to pursue?

And whether (B) for some will be considered as a back-up plan should (A) not become viable?

As this is a late application, Scottish Ministers will appreciate that detailed options appraisals on certain of the assets are ongoing. These appraisals will be driven by community need, financial sustainability and deliverability against the agreed acquisition objectives.

NWMCWC is also looking to learn from other community experiences before deciding whether assets should be managed directly by the Community Company or leased to private individuals or companies. Both routes can meet the same objectives but each has its own risks and disadvantages.

NWMCWC is keen for as many individuals and businesses as possible to be involved in managing and developing Ulva and we shall actively look for ways to develop such partnerships.

The Business Plan very clearly states that NWMCWC may have a number of different roles in the delivery of the acquisition objectives – as manager, facilitator or enabler. In addition, we intend to seek the views of the community on various categories of assets as they are considered for refurbishment and operation.

Housing properties will be rented out in the first instance in the expectation that some of them will also be used to support business activities such as Bed and Breakfast or Guest House services. NWMCWC will possibly operate Ardalum House hostel and campsite itself. There is a fine balance between ensuring that the Community Landlord can generate sufficient income to ensure its financial sustainability and meeting its obligations as a responsible housing landlord. In addition to ensuring that its resident population have access to economic opportunities to operate businesses. This means that a mix of some assets being run in-house to generate trading income and other assets being rented out to generate rental income is likely to be required.

A back up plan does exist whereby if it is proving overly challenging to operate a trading business in-house, then it could at a later point be rented out to a third party.

In table 5 of the BP mention is made about 4 craft studios. Can NWMCWC please advise:

Where they foresee these going?

Initially, the proposal would be to use “Ted’s shed” which is an existing wooden building already set up as a large woodworking space. It has more than enough space available for 4 craft units. It has electricity, running water and “basic” toilet facilities. The island also offers a number of other potential locations for craft studios or workshops and these will be investigated at a later date, however, it is likely that these will be close to where the current population live and existing services can more easily be accessed.

Upon reviewing the BP, Scottish Ministers don’t see the church or the land at Ulva Ferry on mainland Mull. Please can NWMCWC advise:

What they foresee using the church for?

What are their plans for the land at Ulva Ferry (and the slipways)?

Ulva Church: The Community Consultation identified activities such as weddings, community events, private hires, musical events, art exhibitions and occasional church services. For example, reinstatement of Harvest Thanksgiving and Easter services especially for the school. (these ceased very recently due to the dangerous state of the building). All of the above will contribute to the acquisition objectives of economic and social regeneration. However a detailed survey of the church is required to ascertain costs of refurbishment and operation for these possible uses. Access to all buildings on Ulva has not so far been possible. The legislation does not require the owner to grant access therefore NWMCWC has identified potential uses and will further develop these once access to the buildings is possible.

Land at Ulva Ferry: Ensuring availability at Ulva Ferry of car parking and shelter (for deliveries and passengers waiting for the ferry) is very important for residents of Ulva. With an increasing number of residents on the island, more parking space will be required and the present rudimentary garages will become increasingly inadequate. Mull and Iona Community Trust (MICT) are beginning to develop plans to provide facilities for people using the new pontoons at Ulva Ferry as well as more car parking for visitors. NWMCWC believe that post-purchase the best way to proceed at Ulva Ferry will be to embark on a masterplanning exercise jointly with MICT in order to make best use of the land available.

Mull Fishermens Association and NWMCWC have already begun discussions on a joint approach to ensure the piers meet the needs of all users, current and future. (Please see letter of support submitted on 9th January)

Underpinning all this is an understanding by NWMCWC that appropriate management of the land and access to the pier and slipway at Ulva Ferry are absolutely vital to the success of the development of Ulva itself. Any impediment to access from the Mull side would have a severe impact on delivery of many of the developments outlined in the Business Plan

Scottish Ministers note a proposal for the possible creation of small crofts. Can MWMCWC please confirm if:

Any discussions with the Crofting Commission have taken place in regards to this and if so, what has been the Commission reaction to creating new crofts?

The strategy for agriculture on Ulva will be developed following a land management and agricultural options appraisal with specialist input and advice as appropriate. Therefore at this time NWMCWC has not taken formal advice from the Crofting Commission, although our experience of establishing nine forest crofts on Mull suggests that this process may take some time.

Scottish Ministers note the proposals for the woodland and the agricultural land, and that further consideration on how to best to utilise this land will take place, and that Brexit may have an impact on the agricultural side. Given Brexit will occur in 2019 can MWMCWC please advise:

What contingency planning is being considering for the agricultural land should Brexit not make the agricultural land viable?

What are NWMCWC plans for the land that isn't covered by the woodland or the agricultural land? (I.e. is there any bio-diversity (given rare wildlife) or general land management plan being planned, and if so, what is it?)

When will NWMCWC know how their plans for the forestry and agricultural land?

As in any business, risk assessment will be a continuous activity throughout the project. Implications of Brexit will be included as the business is taken forward.

Agriculture in less favoured areas and hill ground in Scotland is already very tenuous, however NWMCWC has already had expressions of interest. Options include splitting the in-bye land into two units and/or providing small parcels of land to residents. It is recognised that farmers and crofters will probably need to have other occupations in addition to working their land.

Work on land management and biodiversity action planning will be initiated as soon as practicable after the Ministerial decision and developed post-purchase. NWMCWC are already in discussion with Woodland Trust Scotland about possible partnership options and these discussions will intensify once the Ministerial decision is made.

Scottish Ministers note NWMCWC plans for re-developing the current building assets with the creation of camping sites, tourist facilities, area for new business, and housing improvements. Can NWMCWC please advise:

Would any development require planning consents?

Whether any contact has been with the relevant planning authorities?

Could planning effect the proposed development timescales?

Renovation of existing housing stock is unlikely to require planning permission. An offer from Moxon Architects to waive professional fees will enable NWMCWC to fast track the design and building warrant work. With the permission of existing tenants it should be possible to complete this initial work on No. 3 Bracadale and the Ferry House in the next few months so that the renovation programme may be started very soon after a purchase in June.

Regarding possible new builds, a preliminary discussion with the Strategic Planning Officer for Argyll and Bute Council has confirmed that under present planning guidelines, new builds on Ulva would need to be treated as special cases and obtaining permission would not be straightforward. However, the Local Plan is currently under review and NWMCWC has provided representations under the Major Issues Consultation recently carried out. These representations have stressed the need for spatial planning policies to properly recognise the needs of remote and fragile communities such as Ulva and Ulva Ferry. Timescales for proposed developments on Ulva have included the need to obtain the necessary consents. The planning and consenting process for potential new builds will be carried out in parallel with the renovation of existing houses which is the top priority in the short term.

Scottish Ministers are aware of a track running from Gometra to the boat house for use by the residents of Gometra and clearly any new residents living on Ulva. Can NWMCWC please advise:

That upgrading the path network on Ulva will take place and when it's expected to start?

The Feasibility Study confirmed that some minor access works are required to the network on Ulva. For the most part, at least in the early stages, this will mostly involve small scale drainage and pothole filling work along existing tracks. New residents whether in renovated existing houses or later in new builds will all be at the eastern end of the island. It should not be necessary to carry out any significant work on the more distant tracks in the short term. Away from the tracks, the footpath network will also require some small scale maintenance and repair work. A cost will be involved but this is not expected to be very significant.

On the broader and slightly longer term question of infrastructure requirements to support a population of as many as 50 or more, it will be necessary to carry out a detailed assessment of options.

NWMCWC have set an objective for development of Ulva to be “green” and environmentally sustainable and this will be a major factor in deciding how to approach infrastructure. For example, it is unlikely that construction of wide roads will be supported and small, low impact vehicles – possibly electrically powered may be the preferred solution. It is however too early at this stage to provide more detail.

In relation specifically to the track to Gometra, NWMCWC is already in general contact with the owner of Gometra regarding the proposed purchase and possible future interactions. As a community landlord of Ulva, NWMCWC will always wish to be a good neighbour and to that end plans to maintain the track to a reasonable standard even though there is not a legal requirement to do so.

Mention is made of selling land (excluding selling land for housing plots). Scottish Ministers consider that allowing a community to buy land and then to sell parts of it may not be in the spirit of the Act. Should NWMCWC be considering selling any land after purchase, then please advise:

Under what reason would it occur?

NWMCWC wishes to buy the whole estate and retain it as a single unit for the benefit of the community. However, it must be practically recognised that there may be circumstances where investment funds can only be delivered through selling the freehold of an asset. Any such proposal would need to be considered in the light of the objectives set out for the community acquisition. That is to say it would need to be invested in the company’s assets as part of enabling the delivery of broader social and economic benefit to the whole community of Ulva and North West Mull.

It should also be noted that in the event of any freehold sale of an asset, NWMCWC would take care to include appropriate safeguards in the Title in order to protect the interests of the community.

NWMCWC have indicated that a development manager will manage the assets with some of the sites and other buildings appearing to include more than just the development officer (i.e. cleaning/admin staff), and mention is made about volunteers (table 6 in the BP for example). Can NWMCWC please advise:

How they intend to fund such a posts after the initial 18 months, if external funding is not secured?

Who would carry out the work improvements or future maintenance on Ulva (i.e. local or national trades people)?

Give an indication of how many possible jobs (direct or indirect) could be created and whether they would likely be full/part time or seasonal?

Would there be opportunities for other local volunteering or education opportunities?

The Business Plan shows that surplus cash flow will start to be generated after about 18 months. As with any business this will be used to support ongoing development with any surplus reinvested in the business. Employment contracts will be properly procured in line with good public procurement practice. If there are opportunities within this good practice to involve local trades people or offer training or apprenticeships these will be actively pursued as these will clearly help deliver the broader objectives of community ownership.

The following is a breakdown of anticipated numbers of jobs safeguarded or created in the first few years under community ownership. (all in year round Full Time Equivalents)

Existing jobs safeguarded:

- Fishing 7
- Ferry 1
- Restaurant 2
- Bracadale B & B 0.5
- Bus driver 0.5

New direct employment:

- Development Manager 1
- Hostel / Campsite 1
- Admin officer 0.5 (currently run out of Bell Ingram office Oban)
- Ferry 0.5
- Cleaning 0.5

New indirect employment:

- Ulva House (as guest House) 1
- Craft Studios 2
- Farms / Crofts 2
- Recording studio 1
- Business units 2
- Self employed (teleworking etc) 2

These numbers are obviously estimates at this stage but they are believed to be realistic. In total around 11 existing jobs will be safeguarded and up to 14 new jobs created in the first few years.

A significant part of the work which has gone into the CRTB process for Ulva so far has been done on a voluntary basis by Directors of NWMCWC and other members of the Ulva Buyout committee. This will continue but there is also considerable scope for the engagement of more volunteers from the local community and further afield. This could be through involvement in development planning and also in practical work on the ground. A number of local experts are already engaged on a voluntary basis. For example, the Chairman of Mull Fishermen's Association who is a retired fisherman and oyster farmer will be advising on Piers, Fishing and Aquaculture (especially oysters). Other local fishermen and pier users will also provide input.

Some voluntary Directors of Mull and Iona Community Trust will very likely be involved in relation to housing, Phase 2 developments at Ulva Ferry, and other areas of mutual interest. The Secretary and other Committee members of Ulva School Community Association will be offering advice and local liaison. An experienced fundraising Chief Executive and member of Board of Directors of Comar (Island based Arts Charity) is providing fundraising support alongside many others involved in the music and entertainment world who are supporting fundraising, including events. A local Graphic Designer is assisting with design of promotional material.

A number of local farmers and crofters are providing ongoing advice and suggestions in relation to land use and potential agricultural development. Various local wildlife and environmental experts will be feeding into the Biodiversity Action Plan. As to practical work on the ground, it is expected that many volunteers will be involved in environmental auditing, path creation and improvements, and ongoing fundraising etc. supported by the existing Board, sub-committee and employees of the Company.

Scottish Ministers expect that any purchase of assets by a community will bring benefits to the whole community (through either the use of the asset, employment, benefiting from visitors using the asset etc). Upon reviewing the BP, Scottish Ministers (other than Ulva Ferry School class role potentially increasing if more people stay on Ulva) can't seem to see how the wider

North West Mull community and indeed Mull as whole would benefit from owning the land in question. Please can NWMCWC:

Give an expanded indication to Scottish Ministers of what benefits the wider community will gain by owning Ulva? (this could be the Economic, Environmental and Social benefits – as like answered in the application form).

Economic benefits: Community ownership will enable the businesses that already exist on Ulva to be granted secure tenancies to provide security and allow them to grow and develop. Under private ownership they have been subject to insecure tenancy arrangements and no investment in the fabric of their buildings. Community ownership will ensure these assets are developed to their full potential either through securing grant funding or a partnership with the tenant to raise capital to invest in the asset. The businesses have been unable to develop as their ongoing presence was subject to the owners' choice.

Community ownership will also enable new sites and buildings to be made available to new business entrants. A site ('Ted's shed') has been identified for early action. The site requires minor works to make it available for letting to small businesses who want to establish on Ulva. This will create new employment on the island as well as opportunities for younger people, with no capital, to start their own business. One of the key objectives of the community acquisition is to change the age demographic of North West Mull. Having small business or craft space available for young people who want to move to the area to set up their own business will help change this age demographic.

Additionally, establishing new crofts or agricultural holdings will allow the creation of new small businesses on the island. Community ownership (where the business owners have control over the land on which they work) will enable these small agricultural based businesses to work together collaboratively to enhance the natural environment, as well as joint marketing and production initiatives.

Ownership will enable existing and new tourism businesses to develop. As well as space being made available, or their tenancies being secured, community ownership enables joint marketing of Ulva's range of offers. The publicity both nationally and internationally already generated by the community's actions (BBC, Al Jazeera, AFP and others) will be exploited to promote Ulva as a fantastic place to visit, live and work. These existing businesses include the Boathouse Restaurant and Ulva Ferry.

New businesses will be established through the management and letting of holiday accommodation (in existing and possibly new cottages), the development of a hostel in either Ardalum or Ulva House and the development of camping and glamping pods. Other new businesses that will be developed later could include aquaculture and marine tourism. The increase in visitors to Ulva will help support existing businesses on the island and in NW Mull. Opportunities will be taken wherever possible to support existing local business in the development of sites on the island, off the island and through the use of local contractors.

Community ownership will guarantee use of the piers by the existing 6 fishing boats. They in turn land their catch to a Mull based shellfish company and sell to Mull businesses. A number of Mull-based tourism businesses are also closely linked with Ulva – For example, Mull Magic walking tours, Turus Mara, Mull Charters and Mull Ranger service all work around and/or on Ulva. Management by the community will ensure opportunities for these businesses to grow as they can be granted secure access rights and collaborate with joint marketing and promotion. In addition, increased visitor numbers will sustain and very likely lead to expansion of some of these existing businesses as well as offering opportunities for new businesses to become established.

There are opportunities to build on the island's global interest through its Macquarie connection, as well as its outstanding natural beauty. Management by a community group will ensure these interests are all balanced with the wider community aspirations of increasing population, attracting more young people, allowing new businesses to establish and improving facilities for visitors.

One of the main objectives of community ownership is to increase the local population. This will lead to increased spend in shops and businesses across NW Mull.

Within five years:

- 10 existing businesses will have been given a secure future and investment made to allow them to grow and develop. (e.g. Fishing boats, Boathouse, Ferry, Tour operators)
- 9 new businesses will have established on the island or nearby as a result of community ownership of the island. (e.g. Hostel, Ulva House, Campsite, Teleworkers, Craft Studios, Wildlife tours, Deer stalking, Farming)

Increased turnover in the local economy will be significant:

- £500k of construction spend on renovation of 6 houses, focused on local contractors wherever possible.
- Possibly construction of first new build houses within five years.
- 14 new jobs will be created.
- 10 existing jobs will be safeguarded.
- Visitor numbers to Ulva will increase from 5,000 pa to 10,000 pa
- The annual economic contribution from visitors to Ulva and North West Mull will increase dramatically. At present there is virtually nowhere for visitors to stay overnight on Ulva and nowhere to spend money once the Boathouse restaurant has closed at 5:00pm

As stated by NWMWC in the CRTB application, within the community, Ulva is seen as a part of and not apart from North West Mull. Social and economic development of Ulva will provide a very significant boost to the economy of North West Mull because virtually all the benefits mentioned above will have direct positive impact on the broader economy. This will be true whether physically based on Ulva or in some cases where Ulva adds an additional opportunity or dimension to an existing business in North West Mull.

Social benefits: Community ownership will provide a very significant increase in the number of properties available to let at an affordable rent in North West Mull. 6 properties will be brought into use within the first 1-2 years. Funding will be sought for further new affordable housing on the island. House plots will be identified for sale with a rural housing burden to ensure they remain as affordable principal homes. Renovation of six houses has the potential to take the population up from the present 5 tenants to around 18 very quickly. A lettings allocation strategy will need to be developed which amongst other things acknowledges the fact that North West Mull has an ageing population. This means younger people are needed to increase the working age population and move to a less skewed age demographic. At present most workers travel in to the Ulva Ferry area, so provision of more housing provides an opportunity to create a community that lives and works in the immediate area. The importance of all this in regard to survival of local facilities, including shops, cafes, health care and schools have all been stressed in our application.

Enabling the creation of new small or micro businesses and agricultural ventures will also support an increased population and more young people moving to the area. Creating a more economically active population in an area characterised by retirees and holiday homes will help create a more cohesive community.

Long term secure access to the potential community facilities on the island, especially the Church, will provide a community focus which is lacking currently. There are no community facilities on the island. Bringing the Church and other assets into community ownership will provide space for meetings, social and community events and potentially commercial hirings. (photoshoots etc.)

Community ownership will also give the community the final say in what happens on the island. For so many years local people have been frustrated and disappointed with the way the island has been managed and saddened to see the loss of so many people, homes and businesses. Giving the community the power to build new houses, create new businesses and see the land brought back into

productive use will develop their confidence and enable greater involvement in all of the decisions that matter to them.

Within five years:

- Population increase from 5 to 25
- Local school roll to rise from 9 to 18
- Population demographic shift towards more younger families with children
- 6 newly available affordable houses in NW Mull area with more to follow
- Increase in confidence in residents of NW Mull area
- Provision of new community space for local people

Environmental: Whilst the environmental aspirations of the current owner have been laudable, lack of funds has seen many of the island's habitats suffer. Poor deer management, a lack of protection for native habitats, bracken becoming extremely invasive, lack of attention to the native woodland – are all areas that will be addressed through community ownership. Funds, volunteer time and goodwill are available to community owners to achieve such ambitions, which are not available to private owners.

There are several areas of rare species habitat that require urgent protection and care. The Biodiversity Action Plan proposed by NWMCWC will identify those areas requiring greater protection. This will inform an Integrated Development Plan for the island.

Access tracks across the island require some maintenance to enable better access for residents and visitors. Again, a lack of funds has hampered this work. It is NWMCWC's intention to maintain the 'No Car' policy and to introduce electric vehicles where possible for all on island transport. The long-term aspiration is for the island to become carbon neutral, through banning cars, having renewable or biofuel heating sources in all buildings and planting more native woodland.

NWMCWC has proved itself extremely capable in managing woodland as well as establishing schemes to bring young people and visitors to areas under their management. Their Forest School initiative has seen around 30 children annually visit their existing forests and they plan to extend this to include Ulva.

NWMCWC wish to stress that the environmental benefits mentioned above are of importance at all geographical levels. Locally on Ulva and for North west Mull, more widely throughout Mull and Scotland as a whole, as well as internationally.

Further detail on all of the above outcomes that will arise from community ownership are detailed in the Feasibility Study and Business Plan as well as the NWMCWC application to register an interest in the island and associated assets.

The income on rental appears to be based on "full occupancy levels" right from the start. Can NWMCWC confirm:

Whether the calculations are based on full occupancy levels?

Rental income from commencement is based on properties that are already being rented out, or can be immediately rented with additional rental income only arising once assets are developed or renovated. The existing tenants have indicated that they intend to stay on the island. Therefore it is anticipated that there will be continuity of existing rental income in the initial period.

Scottish Ministers note community shares may be an option to help fund purchase. However an NWMCWC current legal structure appears not to allow this. Also NWMCWC state selling off surplus assets could also help to raise purchase costs.

Can NWMCWC please advise how would they achieve raising community shares and what surplus assets NWMCWC are thinking could be sold?

Options for providing matched funding to the SLF application are currently being worked on. This might involve community shares although the timescales imposed by the CRTB process militate against the governance changes necessary to issue community shares. In terms of the sale of surplus assets, as outlined above, this is not a preferred option for NWMCWC as they have made a good case for acquisition of the whole estate. However, if the community ownership objectives for the whole can be met with partnership with the private sector, then NWMCWC will be duty bound to consider this. No specific assets have been identified for sale.

Scottish Ministers note the list of potential funding sources (including loans). Can NWMCWC please confirm (could take the form of a table to reply and also covers purchase and development):

How much money you are planning to ask the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) for?

What are the back-up funders is the SLF do not award full grant requested?

Has contact been made with the funders as noted in the BP?

How much are NWMCWC planning to seek in funding from these funders? and for what?

The draft SLF application requests support towards 80% of capital purchase costs (which include Ardalum House which is not the subject of this Right to Buy Registration.) We have requested SLF revenue funding of £99,500 at an intervention rate of 51%.

Confidential discussions have already started with a potential private sector sponsor for capital match funding and also potential support with development. The local Member of the Scottish Parliament, Mr Michael Russell, has supported NWMCWC in these discussions. Simultaneously a number of other options for providing the match funding for the capital application are being worked through. These cannot be progressed until the Minister's decision is made. Following this, and within a very compressed timescale, these options will need to be refined in advance of the SLF Committee considering NWMCWC's application.

At this stage, and in light of the confidential discussions which have already taken place, NWMCWC is confident of raising the match funding necessary for the SLF application.

In terms of revenue support, NWMCWC has already identified options and secured in part the match funding for the first 2-3 years of ownership.

Scottish Ministers acknowledge this is a long term project, and it will take more than 5 years to implement and that long term forecasts may not be ready, however can NWMCWC provide:

An expected 10 and 15 year projections of where they'd like to be by then?

NWMCWC is confident of significant social and economic development in key priority areas in the first 5 years. For example a doubling or trebling of the population can easily be envisaged based on rapid renovation of existing housing stock. As stated in the CRTB application, in the longer term (say 15 to 20 years) NWMCWC believe there is every possibility of the population reaching 50 or more people.

These population “projections” are mentioned here because they are probably the most important indicators of success going forward. Clearly, NWMCW also expect to be able to demonstrate delivery of the other diverse aspects of social and economic development mentioned in the application and many of which are referred to elsewhere in this paper.

Ministers will appreciate it is very difficult to set detailed timelines out to 10 and 15 years for every activity. Perhaps the best way to express NWMCW’s 10 and 15 year ambitions is to say that: After 10 to 15 years, NWMCW would like (and expects) to see Ulva with a thriving, diverse and sustainable community, economically robust and closely integrated with the wider community of North West Mull.

Scottish Ministers also have a couple of other enquiries about costs

Please advise what other sources (other than crowd funding) they are planning to use/apply to, to make up the missing 5% on purchase costs?

Do NWMCW propose to use any of their surplus capital to invest in buying or developing the land?

If not, please can you explain why the company buying the land is unprepared to use their own money to help with purchase or development?

Although NWMCW currently holds significant bank and cash balances it does not have unallocated surplus capital. It is all committed to ongoing projects: For the woodfuel business, the micro hydro project and for the contractually unavoidable costs of replant and re-fence of the holdings on Mull.

However, the current balance in the Woodland Accounts could be used to bridge activities on Ulva as long as there was no unacceptable risk involved. NWMCW also point out that the present Ulva CRTB application process has already involved use of Company funds to a significant extent. Without this, and also the very significant unpaid voluntary work over the past year by Directors and others the present position could probably not have been reached.

Scottish Ministers aren’t sure if all projected income and outcome streams (in appendix 9 of the BP) have been captured (for example, have business rates been taken into account, has any legal costs been taken into account in relation to potential planning costs or asset development costs (like Health & Safety), staffing costs, costs for the church and Ulva Ferry land or costs associated with croft creation, acquiring machinery, and for income whether rental incomes from craft sites, or Ulva Church, or land at Ulva ferry, the woodland, farming etc) have been captured.

Current levels of business rates for the Isle of Ulva bring the rateable values to a level well below the small business rates relief level, therefore it is not anticipated in the first 5 years that business rates will be payable. Where properties are operated by third parties, rates would be the responsibility of the tenant operating that particular business. Provision has been made within development costs for legal costs (e.g. new leases) in relation to routine asset management (e.g. legislative requirements). For commercial leases, it is common practice that the incoming tenant will cover the legal costs as part of the lease agreement which would reduce the legal costs incurred with such commercial leases.

For specific projects being taken forward, related planning, legal and development costs will form part of that particular project which the directors will ensure is accurately costed and funded before being taken forward and will be subject to their own detailed business planning processes.

For agricultural income, a relatively low amount of rental income is anticipated whether it is operated as a farm with the incoming tenant undertaking the costs of development of the land, or the alternative

use of the land as multiple crofts which may in total return a similar level of rental income. This is included as income in the Business Plan.

Scottish Ministers can see how NWMCWC will be able to monitor the success of the repopulation of Ulva, but can NWMCWC please advise:

How you plan to monitor the long term success of the other proposals?

Financial sustainability will be a critical measure with the directors monitoring on a monthly basis, the financial performance of the Isle of Ulva against its budgets. Other measures will include the number of new businesses created, the number of economically active residents, periodic survey of the economic impact of the buyout, and surveying local people in North West Mull on the buy-out and its impact. Continuous communication will be maintained with the people and businesses of Ulva, Ulva Ferry and North West Mull.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Scottish Ministers note differences between proposals in the feasibility study to the BP. In that a number of proposals in the feasibility study don't appear in the business plan (for example – tourist boards, renewables, affordable new build homes, conservation, some tourist idea's, transport infrastructure etc. Or in the BP last page that a number of proposals may be investigated further. Can NWMCWC please advise:

***Why some of the proposals in the feasibility study (which also formed part of the CRtB application) haven't appeared in the BP?
And give an indication of when the proposals as noted in the last page of the BP will be investigated?***

The Business Plan is a 5 year plan with a focus on essential developments delivered in one of three ways; Direct operations by NWMCWC, Facilitated by or Enabled by the Company. Clearly not all of the possibilities identified in the Feasibility Study have the same priority. As such some do not appear in the present issue of the Business Plan. NWMCWC wish to stress again that the Business Plan is a living plan which will be subject to continuous change.

One of the key objectives of the Feasibility Study was precisely to enable the definition of a robust programme of work which could realistically be carried out as soon as possible after purchase of Ulva by the Community. The Business plan reflects this.

Also, whilst a number of proposals considered in the feasibility study do not appear or have low priority in the present Business Plan, they may of course be investigated further at a later date. As these proposals are fleshed out, they will be re-incorporated into the Business Plan. As might entirely new proposals which emerge either from experience of managing Ulva or from third parties.

NWMCWC are certain that Ministers will understand that with an undertaking as large and complex as the development and management of Ulva by the Community it is essential to adopt a prioritised and carefully phased approach. The key question is whether the ambitious scope and pace set out in the Business Plan can be delivered and NWMCWC is very confident this will be achieved.

Are you the otter man?

An interesting AGM? Many may think that impossible. But in the **APPENDIX 1** findings of the Isle of Mull Hotel at Mull Otter Group's AGM in November we were informed about the group's work over the past year; delighted by Lochdonhead Primary pupils' film about their nature trail (thank you, Claire Bidwell, Grace, Harry, Ella, Jamie and Lucy) and intrigued by guest speaker Pippa Garrard's fascinating talk about lessons learned from HWDT's data collection. Observations at sea and from the land have provided valuable information about our cetacean population, alive and dead.

So why does Mull Otter Group collect dead otters? Nigel Burch, Mortality Officer, explains. "Dead otter? Report to Mull Otter Group? End of story? No." Nigel tries to gather precise information: where and when did the otter die? What happened? He will survey the site, taking photos and measurements. He will aim to establish where the otter was coming from and where it was going by observing field signs such as tracks, spraint or holts. With road casualties, were there culverts nearby? Were they blocked, forcing the otter on to the road?

In road traffic accidents, he finds, the majority of fatalities happen near drainage offlets. When otters use offlets to cross the verge, they are hidden from motorists' sight until they move out into the road. A glancing blow to the head is the most common injury. In November, there were two reported road traffic casualties: at the time of writing, that brings the 2017 total to nine. Nigel's work raises more questions than answers. But he is constantly searching for insights. In September, he worked with two visiting German ecologists to identify possible "mitigation methods" such as culvert clearing and wildlife warning reflectors. Will they help? Only time – and careful data collection – will tell.

Otter carcasses are tagged and stored in Nigel's freezer until they can be transported to Cardiff University's Otter Project, which receives otters from all over the UK. They send information back to Nigel and the Mull group: for example, the gender, age and condition of the animal: were there any pre-existing problems? Tissue samples are taken for further research: is there any evidence of the effects of pollution? Or parasites? The skulls are sent to Edinburgh University where they contribute to research into morphology. Are there regional variations, for example between otters on Mull and otters in Shetland? So our Mull otters contribute to scientific research which, one day, may benefit otters near and far.

From his RAF days in the 1970s, when he first encountered two curious and playful otters, to his time in the Fire Service and subsequent retirement on Mull, Nigel has been interested in "everything on earth and in space". He is a founder member of Mull Otter Group but can be equally enthused by spotting an oystercatcher nest on the shore or an unusual plant on the hillside.

Nigel has recorded thousands of sightings of live otters over the past 27 years; his observations and suggestions are based on hard evidence. His interest in finding out what disturbs otters and his conviction that "working together is

the best way forward" led to the publication of his notes of guidance on watching and photographing otters, whether you are on the land or out on the water in a kayak. The more informed we are, the better we can enjoy our otters without disrupting their lives. With MOG Chair, Jane Stevens, Nigel has visited local schools and helped Mull youngsters to understand Mull's otters. "Are you the otter man?" Nigel Burch has to own up: he is. *Jenny DesFountain*

Reminder to vote

Great News! Our Stage One application to the Scottish Land Fund has been approved which means we can now progress to Stage Two where we actually apply for funding. There are almost certainly only two options - either we buy Ulva for the Community or it will be sold off to the highest bidder with the loss of all the potential outlined in the feasibility study.

The current opportunity of bringing Ulva into community ownership gives a unique chance to revitalise the area in a host of positive ways. Our vision is unashamedly ambitious, but with an enthusiastic and committed approach it is also realistic and achievable.

It is crucial that we can show there is strong support within the community for this project. Please make sure your vote is YES to enable us to breathe new life into Ulva and North-West Mull.

MICT and USCA have both re-confirmed their support for the community buyout of Ulva and NWMCWC look forward to working with various organisations as plans for the island develop. *Colin Morrison, Chair NWMCWC*

IF ALCOHOL IS COSTING YOU MORE THAN MONEY

Call AA for help

National Helpline 0845 769 7555

About AA: our service is free, we are not a cult and we are not a religious organisation.

Everything is completely private and confidential.

We help anyone who wants to stop drinking.

Alcoholism is not a weakness it is an illness.



TOBERMORY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Opening times:

Monday:	Closed
Tuesday:	4.30 pm – 6.00 pm
Wednesday:	4.30 pm – 8.00 pm
Thursday:	4.30 pm – 6.00 pm
Friday:	4.30 pm – 8.00 pm
Saturday:	9.00 am – 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

#ULVABUYOUT

**Resident of
North West
Mull?**

**Not yet
voted in the
Postal
Ballot?**

**No Problem!
There is
still time.**

**The Ballot
Closes on
the 8th of
January.**

**Please use
your vote -
Support of
the Buyout.**

**THANKYOU!
The Ulva
Buyout
Team.**

Consultation Events

Mull and Iona Community Trust is hoping to
purchase Ardura Forest
from Forestry Commission Scotland.

Our consultants are keen to hear suggestions
for how the forest can be used best
for the community, concerns that you may have
and to answer any questions raised.

Please come along on Thursday 11 January
to either drop-in meeting
between 2-4 pm or 7-9pm in An Roth,
Craignure.

There may be cake!

For more information please contact
Moray Finch
01680 812905



An Roth Community Enterprise Centre, Craignure
The island hub for business & community activity



MULL & IONA
COMMUNITY TRUST

Call Sheila on 01680
812900 or email
srodgers@mict.co.uk
for all booking
enquiries.
www.mict.co.uk

Large, medium & small rooms
available for seminars, meetings,
training, functions, therapy sessions,
workshops & informal meeting
space.

Hot desking, office services and high
speed fibre broadband available to
the public. Teas, coffees & lunch by
arrangement.

Discounted rates for charities and
local groups.

Drop in for a tour of the building!

Room Hire Available

At Tobermory Harbour, Taigh Solais, Ledaig for meetings,
functions, training sessions, workshops, groups and more.
Capacity: 24 seated and up to 30 persons, approx. 35 m².
HD Screen, Wi-Fi, Tables, Small galley kitchen.



Competitive Hourly rate and reduced day rates.

For more information or to make a booking
contact Fraser Corbett on 01688 302876

fraser.corbett@tobermoryharbour.co.uk

www.tobermoryharbour.co.uk

Tobermory Harbour, Facilities for all.

